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TRIAL FOR DISRUPTION OF STATE DISCIPLINE AT KUNCICE

The trial reported in the following article seems to be in line with a current trend to promote higher production and save money and material within Czechoslovakia. Similar trials, designed to make examples of the defendants, sometimes result in considerably stiffer sentences than thic one, but almost always feature "confessions" without any form of protest.

On Surday, 20 July 1952, the Ostrava Okres criminal court pass id sentences in the case of nine former employees of the Klement Gottwald Steel Combine in Kuncice accused of disrupting state discipline, misappropriating public moneys, and embezzlement. The court was presided over by Frantisek Kaleta, and the cases were prosecuted by M. Kolaja and Okre. Prosecutor A. Vasicek. Kames of the defending attorneys were not published.

The accused, some of whom were employees of the capital investment department of the combine, were Richard Kriz, former chief of the electrical capital investments branch; Engr Karol Ricanek, his deputy; Karel Prycek; Karel Nezgoda, former chief of the office for suxiliary workers; Albert Kucera, former director of the combine; Vladimir Dostal combine economist; and Frantisek Sasin, former chief of the wages and work seculon of the Kraj Trade-Union Council in Ostrava.

The prosecution charged that former director Kucera, in order to speed the construction of the first blast furnace, decided to have special bonus payments paid to workers who were directly connected with the erection of the furnace, as an added incentive for speed. The furnace was to be fired on 1 Janu-

A plan for the distribution of these bonus payments and for the evaluation of work performed in order to be eligible for thes payments is said to have been faultily drawn up by the former chief of the capital investments department, Engineer Trojan. Kucera made no effort to uncover this mistake. Ricanek and Prycek were among the technicians of the investment department who signed contracts with leaders of fitting crews and mechanics for these purposes. The

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contracts were approved by Kriz. Agreements were sometimes made after the work was already in progress, or even after the job had been finished. These contracts were approved without being checked for accuracy. The three defendants caused abnormally high bonus payments to be made, sometimes in cases where the terms of the contract had not been satisfied, or where the quality of the work performed was unsatisfactory. In return for these falsifications, they received up to 13 percent of the bonus payments from the payees. Sometimes this percentage was withheld by compulsion; at other times the leaders of the various crews gladly gave their assent to this fraud. The defendants all had large sums of money in their possession, totaling more than the largest bonus payment for each worker.

Another defendant, Nezgoda, was found to be in possession of some 55,000 crowns belonging to the combine, which, he said, he had intended to embezzle. Dostal, the combine economist, was on trial because he approved all the bonus payments without questioning their accuracy. He did institute a payroll check in December, but failed to remedy the situation. Similarly, the defendant Sasin, whose position as chief of the wage and work section expressly required that he check up on any extraordinary bonus payments, failed to perform his duty properly. Sasin, in fact, know nothing of the bonus payments.

All defendants confessed their guilt. They drew sentences ranging from a 9-year prison term plus the loss of civil rights for that period and the loss of all property plus a fine for Ricanek to merely a 9-month prison term for Kucera and Sasin.

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